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MAJOR WARNER A. ROSS

My COLORED BATTALION

BY

Major Warner A. Ross

DEDICATED TO THE

American Colored Soldier

WARNER A. ROSS, Publisher
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MY COLORED BATTALION

You have done me this honor tonight because you know that I was the commander of a wonderful fighting Infantry Battalion composed entirely (myself excepted) of American colored officers and colored men.

You know, too, that for some time, during the Great World War, we were in the very front lines of that magnificent wave of determined Allies in France who held and at last swept back the fiendish forces of autocracy and tyranny and made it possible for liberty loving people to continue their slow but steady progress toward true Democracy.

You would like to hear a great deal about that battalion from its white commander because you know it was made up of brave men and backed by brave women of your own color who did their duty by you and by their country and did it well. Your presence here and the expression on your faces proves that you are deeply, hopefully interested in the integrity and in the advancement of your race.

You would like to know something about me as a soldier too, I suppose, because you have been told I was the best friend the colored soldier had. I am afraid that word *best* makes it unjustly strong, for the colored soldier has many white friends. Nevertheless, I am glad I had the privilege and the opportunity to prove that my efforts in the common cause, the Allies' cause, were not one bit hampered or lessened because my officers and men were colored.

One thing is certain, there was no doubt about the Americanism of my outfit, no question of hyphens, no fear that their love for or their hatred of some other nation exceeded their love for our own. The devotion, the patriotism, the loyalty of the American Negro is beyond question. My only claim is that I treated him justly—that's all he needs or asks.

The Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth United States Infantry (the battalion we are considering) was a remarkable organization, in many ways, in spite of many things, a wonderful organization. In

the battle line and out of the battle line, before the armistice and after the armistice, there was not a phase of military art or of the awful game of war at which this battalion did not excel. At going over the top, attacking enemy positions, resisting raids and assaults, holding under heavy shell fire, enduring gas of all kinds, at patrolling no-man's land, at drill, on hard marches, in discipline and military courtesy, at conducting itself properly in camp or in French villages, and in general all around snappiness, it excelled in all.

Much of this could be seen by going over the battalion and regimental records. But the greatest thing about that battalion is not a matter of direct record in the written data and reports. It is a matter of undying record in the minds and hearts of the men who were that battalion. I speak of the magnificant *morale,* their mutual pride, their teamwork, their spirit of earnest, cheerful willingness and their unsurpassed endurance and bravery in the performance of duty.

It will seem strange to most of you, almost impossible to many who saw service in other

outfits, when I tell you that during my entire service with the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry, which I began as a Captain in December, 1917, and ended as a battalion commander when the regiment was broken up at Camp Upton, New York, in March, 1919, *not one* colored officer under my command was ever placed under arrest, and *not one* colored officer was ever threatened with an efficiency board. And during the many trying months that I commanded the Second Battalion, both in and out of the front lines, only two enlisted men were tried by me as summary court—and they were acquitted.

The same is true of the nine hundred officers and men from all units of the regiment who live in or near Chicago that I brought from Camp Upton to be mustered out of service at Camp Grant. Those of you who were in Chicago remember how proudly the Camp Grant Detachment of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry paraded through the streets on March 10th, 1919, without a hitch or a single breach of discipline.

No doubt that is hard to believe, for it does

upset a host of time honored theories and teachings and honest convictions about military discipline and efficiency, but the facts as stated can be verified. Members of that Battalion and Regiment are right among you. Ask them. These were by no means specially selected or picked outfits. The officers and men were of all kinds, all conditions, mostly draft men and from all sections of the United States. They were representative of their race as a whole, yet in every instance a little company or military police discipline or, in rare cases, a short conference with the captain or major did the work. Considering the excellent service rendered by the units in question and especially by the Second Battalion of that Regiment, I regard this as a great tribute to our American Colored Soldiers. There is much, very much that is worthy of serious consideration about the discipline, the efficiency and the morale of that organization.

And now at the outset, before I go any further with this lecture, I wish to tell you, my colored friends, that I am proud to have been the commander of that battalion. My talk nec-

essarily will be mostly about that Battalion, for I commanded it during the Regiment's experience in the battle lines and during the greater part of my service with the Division. And now more than ever I believe, as I had ample reason to believe then, that no battalion of any army whether white or black or of some other race or color could have done the same things and done them any better than did the Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry, One Hundred and Eighty-third Brigade, Ninety-second Division of the United States Army in France.

It may interest you to know, especially after what I have said about methods of securing discipline—for results count—that I won my commission as a major and what was far more, my job as a front line infantry battalion commander for efficiency under fire. I have a few citations and letters and one signed testimonial by white and colored officers who were witnesses, for coolness, bravery and the like. Thirty-five or forty officers and men were cited for bravery in Division orders. Medals? No, I have received no medals or special dec-

orations. Nor has any living member, officer or man, of my Battalion. In fact, to my knowledge, not one living officer or man of the entire Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry has received any decoration or medal of any sort whatever—American, French, Belgian or any other kind. This, on the face of it, to anyone who knows the facts, would seem either a most glaring injustice or mistake.

Many of the members of my Battalion and of the Regiment, especially those who were with us at the time of the armistice and during all or part of the awful days and weeks just preceding it, feel and resent this most keenly. In the army you know everything must go through "military channels"—from company to battalion to regiment to brigade to division and on up. I recommended some of my officers and men for decorations. And if I know anything about meritorious conduct, real achievement, bravery, valour and the like, they richly deserved them. These recommendations reached brigade headquarters. It is my opinion that certain regular army officers saw fit to head them off.

Soon after the armistice we had a succession of strange regimental commanders, who showed no interest in pressing our case and so because of a combination of unfortunate circumstances the Regiment is medal-less. I understand our Brigade has received some recognition. I do not begrudge any officer or man his medal or medals if he actually earned them, but I do regret it that my Regiment and my own Battalion could be thus ignored. You may believe it or not when I say that I care nothing about medals for myself. What little I did in the cause of Democracy—by that I mean what I did for my Colored Battalion as well as in trying to help whip the enemy—is a matter with me and my own better self.

The citations of which I am incomparably more proud than of the citations I did get or the medals I didn't get were not printed with ink nor stamped on metal. They were written with a point of fire into the brave, true hearts of my colored soldiers.

And who knows (if I may indulge in a little sentiment)? Who can tell? Perhaps those who bravely endured the tourtures of hell, because

of the foolishness of vain oppressors in this wicked world and who uncomplainingly and unselfishly gave all they had, all any one could give—*gave their lives*—in defense of our great nation and in the cause of Democracy. Perhaps, I say, some of the spirits of that Battalion's dead have already whispered in the glorious Realm beyond where the great, all-powerful God of justice, of love, of peace reigns supreme and with Whom man's character is the only thing that counts. Perhaps they have whispered or will whisper, "Our Commander not only braved the fury of the Hun, but he scorned the petty prejudices of a few white persons and treated *us* like officers and men."

Officers designated for service with the Eighty-sixth Division, which was to be formed at Camp Grant, Illinois, were ordered to report for duty August, 28th, 1917. I so reported and was assigned to the Three Hundred and Forty-first Infantry. Being a captain I was selected to command "G" Company. I received my quota of the first drafted men to arrive, on the second of September. They

continued to arrive and in a few weeks I had two hundred and ninety-two men in addition to my five training camp lieutenants. The new organization had just gone into effect. Arms and equipment arrived slowly. There was more or less confusion; no one was right sure what to do and a company commander had a real job on his hands. Day and night I labored—drilled, studied, taught, did paper work, and then after three months or a little over, just when I was beginning to pride myself, like all the other captains, on having the best company in the regiment, and when we were all seeing visions of entraining for France, they began transferring our men—thirty or forty from a company at a time—to other divisions, and our hearts sank.

I tried to get transferred myself, for like many others, I wanted to soldier in France, not at Camp Grant. Company commanders were not being transferred to other camps, but just before Christmas I was ordered to report to the One Hundred and Eighty-third Brigade, a part of which was attached at Camp Grant. I was then assigned to the Three Hundred and

Sixty-fifth Infantry, a regiment of that Brigade and of the Ninety-second Division (colored). I felt sure that the Ninety-second Division, since it was the only complete colored division, and there was not much danger of its men being transferred, would go to France long before the Eighty-sixth—and it did.

For a time I was with the supply company. Then I was transferred to the headquarters company, a rather uncertain and complicated organization in those days, with an authorized strength of seven officers and three hundred and fifteen men. I remained with that company until after our arrival in France.

In the infantry regiments of the Ninety-second Division the lieutenants and captains were colored with the exception of the regimental staff captains and the captains of the headquarters and supply companies. The majors commanding the battalions and the lieutenant-colonel and the colonel were old regular army white officers.

We had been in training in France but a short time when I was made regimental intelligence and operations officer. Here again was

another phase of the actual war game to learn. I was in charge of a large number of selected and specially trained men who made up the intelligence and scout sections, and at the same time was the regimental commander's assistant in preparing our own movements and operations. I had direct charge of all that had to do with our knowledge and information of the enemy. I was also a member of the highest division court-martial—the one that had power to inflict the death penalty.

I received orders to take the battalion intelligence and scout officers and part of the intelligence and scout personnel into the line several weeks ahead of the Division's final arrival there, to study and learn the sub-sector our regiment was later to occupy. I was never sent away to schools or on special missions and was never on leave or in hospital but was on duty with fighting troops continuously.

I have mentioned these things to show you that I had had a large and varied experience under the new army organization and in the new methods of fighting that had developed during the Great War. It was just the sort of

training and experience to fit one for the hard and responsible task of commanding an infantry battalion in the front lines. I had been in direct command of both white and colored officers and men. I knew the colored enlisted man. And I knew the recently-made colored officers as well, fully as well, as did any white officer in our army.

As I just said, I was sent into the lines ahead of the Regiment to study the sector, learn about the enemy opposite and about conditions in general. When we arrived within hearing of the big guns and a little later when our trucks came within range just north of St. Die, I was all interest and all attention, for at last I was getting into the sort of place I had been reading and thinking and wondering about since 1914, and had been working and training for every minute since I entered the training camp at Fort Sheridan, May 10th, 1917. It's hard work getting ready to be killed in a modern war.

The Regular Army Fifth Division, already experienced in the line, was then holding this sector. For several days I was busy at regi-

mental headquarters located in what was left of the village of Denipere. Then with the assistance of guides, I started out to thoroughly cover and learn the sector. This was by no means a small task: it meant many miles of walking and hard climbing for many days, to say nothing of thrills and mental exercise. Our boys had turned a quiet sector into a very lively one and a few days before the Fifth Division moved out they reduced and were partly successful in holding the Chapelle salient. Taken all in all it was somewhat exciting for a novice exploring the very first lines.

There were three battalion fronts or sectors in the front our regiment was to occupy. Each of the three battalions had two companies in front, one in support and one in reserve. The companies were shifted every nine or ten days. French artillery would be behind us. Ours was in training near Bordeaux. The center battalion sector was called C. R. Fontinelle. I soon learned that it got most of the enemy's fire and raids because of the nature of the terrain, meaning lay of the land. This would be held by our Second Battalion, but I

had little idea then that I would soon command it.

The entire front in France was divided into battalion sectors or centers of resistance, called C. R.'s. The battalion was the infantry fighting unit in this war. When in the line, it had everything attached to it to make it a complete organization in itself—machine gun companies, engineer troops, one pounder and Stokes mortar outfits, supply equipment, medical personnel and so on. Regimental and brigade fronts varied in size and in the way they were held. Often a regiment had but one battalion in front, sometimes two and rarely three, as in our portion of the St. Die sector.

There were three lines or systems of defense in this sector. First, the front or first line system of works and trenches, combat groups, dugouts, communicating ways, machine gun implacements, trench mortars, wire and, well, it would take a long time to even name them all. An entire evening easily could be spent telling about any one little phase of the thing. From two to three miles farther back in this sector was the secondary lines or system with

trenches, wire and everything, all ready for occupancy. A little to the rear was most of the light artillery. Several miles farther back was the third line system and the heavy artillery. The front line system was most interesting and by far the most dangerous. There was this about it, too: In case of enemy attack they held. In other words, their occupants stayed and fought to the last man. Those were standing orders and at that time in my eyes it added a sort of awful fascination to the front line trenches and men.

One of the things that impressed me during my first days in the line was the extent, the magnitude of the works, the prodigious amount of labor that had been required to excavate and build these positions while under fire, the cutting and tunneling in many places through solid rock, also the military knowledge that had been brought to bear in the locating and construction of combat groups, observation posts, fields of fire and the like and the amount of system and pluck and energy required to hold them. But one awful, ugly, discouraging word, from a world standpoint, seemed written all over the

enterprise—Waste—waste of life, waste of time, waste of governments' money, waste of all those things misguided humanity loves and fights for. What a shocking, what a saddening lesson from the standpoint of *waste* alone!

Then as I became accustomed and somewhat hardened to the idea of appalling and foolish waste, another thing began to appeal to me more strongly. The beauty of the scenery and the invigorating air and sunshine of the mountains. It was summer, radiant, glowing, glorious summer. All nature vibrating and tingling with life and kindness. The sky so bright, the air so crisp, so bracing; the trees so green and fresh. The flowers, the grass, even the weeds and the very moss on the rocks seemed charged and melodious with joy.

Little rivulets, cold and sparkling, leaped over great boulders through shaded ravines and joined the hilarious stream away below which farther on, where the big ravine had widened, calmly wound its way amid the ruins of the quaint village called Denipere and out through the wide valley beyond. And what a panorama that valley was from the road on a

mountainside north of the town, especially at evening with the parting kiss of a great red sun glowing on the winding river between its green banks and its clumps of willows, and glistening on the tile roofs of the remaining white stone houses, the various colored fields and the patches of wood, the white roads and their rows of tall trees, the hills and shaded depressions, and the gorgeous background of mountains in the distance. It looked different each time I viewed it, but always there was the peaceful glow and glory of God's handiwork. Here, indeed, was La Belle France.

Many a time, at first, I used to forget myself, lost in buoyant meditation, as I gazed over that enchanting valley or walked along the stately mountain roads enveloped in dense foliage, or as I traveled down some secluded pathway or lover's lane beside a rippling brook, inhaling deeply the pungent odor of growing things and cool damp earth. Then, with a start, I would come back to the realization that those screaming shells, those metallic cracks, those weird, jarring blasts were meant to *mangle* and *kill!* That an enemy bent on de-

struction was only a mile or so away; that those glittering airplanes buzzing high above were on missions of hate and murder; that those little mounds I saw everywhere with wooden crosses at one end were the graves of fine young men who had been mangled and slain by their fellow beings. All the surroundings so inspiring, so beautiful; all nature so smiling and so harmonious, and poor, deluded, vain man so out of harmony. Somewhere, somehow, something was wrong—terribly, damnably wrong.

Then down in the very front lines in the edge of the "abomination of desolation" called no-man's land, I watched those fine young men of our Fifth Division, standing silently by their automatics or rifles, gazing with ashen faces and staring eyes over that torn dreaded expanse that separated them from a cunning and deadly foe, and gradually my feelings changed from happiness due to health, the mountain air and the charms of nature, to feelings of depression and sadness, and hatred toward those who advocate and perpetuate in their blind vanity and self-righteous greed those principles and

policies that lead to strife, to heart-ache and to war.

Here, accentuated by the glories of nature, was the horror of war and the awful proof of the degradation of humanity—despite its so-called Christian civilization.

Graves and danger and death. Death over head, death under foot, death in every direction —suffering, loneliness, longing, agony, death— *Death!* But the greedy fiends really responsible were not there. And a sort of awe came over me and a feeling of tender pity for those brave, unselfish men, mere boys, many of them, standing silently, majestically—facing death in those front line trenches.

Time passed quickly, for like all officers of our army who entered the lines, regardless of previous training, I had very much to learn. There was so much to wonder and think about, too, for my job took me to all parts of our sector and necessitated a careful study of the enemy. For example, I had soon noticed that the men of units occupying the most dangerous positions and suffering the greatest inconvenience and strain seemed most care free and calm.

There was an expression on their faces, an atmosphere about them that had not been there during the training period behind the lines. This opened great fields for thought, and I'm still thinking.

Then one day, before I realized that it was time, I saw little groups of blue-clad soldiers—the soldiers of France, standing about in Denipere, and on the roads I saw more little groups; next day there were more, and the following morning, as though it had happened by magic, I found the entire position, front lines and all, occupied and held by those quiet, tired-faced, sturdy heroes of France. The boys of our Fifth Division had moved out during the night. The following night my regiment moved in. The French infantry left several days later when we had become established in our position. A short time after that I was placed in command of our Second Battalion, holding the center sector called C. R. Fontinelle.

The day I took command the enemy put over one of his famous raids. For two and one-half hours he laid a heavy concentrated fire on the

Second Battalion's front line system, then changed it into an almost perfect box barrage around the two front companies and jumped us through our left flank. The raiding was done by one of their notorious, specially-trained shock battalions sent to the sector for that purpose. By excellent work on the part of the two front companies and the support company assisted by a company of engineers, they were soon driven out. They managed to drag most of their dead and wounded with them, but left considerable equipment including several machine guns they had brought over and set up in our trenches.

It would take all evening to tell about that one action, or Fontinelle Raid, alone. There is so much I could tell you about my Battalion, funny things, as well as serious, to say nothing of our Division or the French soldiers and people and what not, that I hardly know what to tell.

But I do know we haven't much time so I think we'll make a long jump, skipping things equally interesting, the bombardments, the patrols, the raids, the experiences and trials at

Fontinelle, then the hard marches, the sleepless, shelterless nights in cold rain and mud, the hardships of the Argonne and our part during the early days of that famous American drive, our tiresome movement from that front and our taking over from the French on the night of October 6th and 7th of C. R. Musson, an important section of the Marbache sector's front, on the east bank of the Moselle River just south and a little west of Metz.

I'll pass over the many interesting and trying happenings and experiences of the thirty-one straight days—intense, nerve-racking days and nights that we occupied that position, and take it up a few days before the armistice, or just before the preliminary to the long-talked of drive for Metz. I'll only have time to tell you briefly of a small part of that, but perhaps you may gain some faint realization of how the boys fought and suffered and won.

First, just a few words to show you the way in which the Ninety-second Division had taken over and held the Marbace sector. At three o'clock on the morning of October 6th, after marching all night, the Second Battalion of the

Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry arrived at Aton, a village about three miles behind the front lines. All that day I spent at the front with the commander of the French battalion then holding the C. R. During the afternoon my officers and part of the non-coms. came up and went over the positions assigned them. That night we stealthily moved in and the French moved out.

This was a key position. Through it, varying from two to five hundred yards from the bank of the river, ran what was known as the Great Metz Road. We held a front of about a mile and a half. I wish I had a big map or a blackboard and time to show you. I can see it all now as plainly as if I were there. Across the Moselle adjoining us on our left at that time was a white division. About two weeks before the armistice the C. R. next to us and adjoining the river, was taken over and occupied by a battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-seventh Infantry of our Division. The C. R. on our right was taken over the night following our arrival by the First Battalion of our Regiment. The First and Third Battalions

took turns holding that C. R. The Three hundred and Sixty-sixth Infantry kept one battalion in line on their right. Adjoining it were the French. Our own division artillery got into position behind us only a few days before the end. At first our Division had three battalions, and during the last two weeks, four battalions in the front line. We held a front line section several times as long as did any other battalion of the Division, in the Marbache sector. Thirty-one straight days was a long, hard stretch for a battalion in an important and far from quiet front or first line position.

Finally, on the night of November 6th-7th we were at last moved back about five miles to the second line of defense. The officers and men were almost completely worn out, many of them bordering on nervous collapse. But even now the Battalion was to get no rest. On the 7th, in compliance with orders from the Commanding General, we put over an operation in which "H" Company and half of "E" went over the top, and on the 8th I was up in front again on very short notice in command of a daylight contact patrol in which I used all of

"F" Company, half of "G" and part of the regimental machine gun company.

So during those two days in the second line, instead of resting, almost the entire Battalion had been all the way back up to the front, over the top, and back again. These were small but extremely trying—tired as we were—and also rather costly operations. I say small—I mean comparatively small as to the numbers of officers and men engaged, but to the individual engaged they were large, quite large. A number were killed and many wounded, including two captains, Mills, commanding "F" Company, and Cranson, commander of "G."

This Battalion had caught most of the hell in the St. Die sector, had done its full share in the Argonne, though, due to the fortunes of war, I suppose, little if any mention is made of it, and in the Marbache sector had held the most important C. R. continuously up to the night of the 6th and 7th, and after the operations of the 7th and 8th just mentioned, you can judge what condition my outfit was in on the morning of November 9th.

Nevertheless, on the morning of November

9th, I received word that the Commanding General had just arrived at Regimental Headquarters in Loisey and wished to see me at once. So, dog-tired, aching all over and dead for sleep, I got into a sidecar and went back. Just as I expected, he handed me an order, Brigade order, that had been sanctioned by Division Headquarters, G. H. Q., and the High Allied Command covering our Brigade's part in the inauguration or preliminary to the Metz drive. It started something like this: "Major Warner A. Ross, commanding the Second Battalion, Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry, will at five o'clock on the morning of November 10th, attack enemy positions—named them—to the east of the Moselle River, will advance to the northern edge of Bois Frehaut and to such and such a point on the river bank and hold until further orders," etc. That evening I received a similar order, changed somewhat from the first one, but what it all meant was that it was up to us—the Battalion—to capture and above all to hold this strong key position just up the river from Metz.

In so far as we were concerned it was a

frontal attack on the general position of Metz. How far the Allies intended or expected to drive straight on toward Metz I do not know. The long advance was to be southeast of us with the idea of eventually isolating Metz. Judging by what happened to us and to the attackers on our flanks during the tenth and eleventh, it would have been foolish, if not impossible, to advance further along the Moselle. That is why the capturing and holding of Bois Frehaut was especially glorious.

The generals commanding our Division and Brigade seemed very anxious that this operation prove a success. Up to this time the Division had not accomplished anything very startling in the way of capturing German strongholds, but here, before the expected armistice went into effect, was an opportunity to prove the Division's ability and worth and refute any whisperings that might be in the air. In other words, to quote one of my high ranking superiors, full and real success here would forever give the division a leg to stand on.

Mine, then, was the honor of being in direct command of the main operation which started

the long discussed Allied move to capture Metz, said to be the most impregnable German stronghold. Mine, too, was the opportunity to give a colored battalion a chance to prove its worth beyond all peradventure, to help them disprove the widely circulated report that colored troops could not advance and hold under real and prolonged heavy fire, to help them dispel the impression so many had that colored officers—platoon leaders and company commanders—could not successfully handle colored soldiers. In short, to give them a chance to win a victory that will stand out more clearly as the years go by, a victory requiring all the virtues that soldiers, individually and collectively should possess—a victory clear cut, unaided, complete and unquestionable, where others had failed and against a stronghold, a part of and guarding a strategic position that at all hazards the enemy meant to hold.

The Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry was chosen, despite its long and continuous work in the front lines, its greatly depleted ranks and shortness of officers. Reinforced by other units, other

men and other officers of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry, the Second Battalion at last met its supreme test—its golden opportunity. I shall try briefly to tell you what it did. for "Bois Frehaut," under the guns of Metz, will remain a memorial to the discipline, the efficiency, the bravery, and devotion to duty of an American colored battalion.

The Three Hundred and Sixty-seventh Infantry, as previously mentioned, had recently taken over one battalion sector or C. R. just across the river. They, too, had orders to advance. A battalion of the white division on their left also was to advance. On our right a small part of a battalion (to be exact, two platoons—about half of one company) of the Three Hundred and Sixty-sixth Infantry was to advance through our Third Battalion, then occupying that C. R.

I may as well tell you, what many people know, that although this was the beginning of the great Allied movement to reduce the strategic stronghold of Metz, with divison after division massing behind us and to our right, the battalion of the white division to the left of the

Three Hundred and Sixty-seventh rushed ahead at zero hour on the morning of the 10th, lost one hundred and fifty-six men in less than five minutes and withdrew to their trenches. The attack battalion of the Three Sixty-seventh sized up the situation and barely left their trenches so withering was the fire.

The troops of a part of a battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-sixth on our right rushed out to take a small wood that laid east of the positions we were to take, got almost to their objectives and rushed back owing to the accuracy and intensity of enemy fire. But it didn't matter much outside of leaving my battalion's right flank entirely wide open, for Bois de la tete d'Or and Bois Frehaut of our position far outflanked it and made it untenable for the Germans. A map of the positions involved tells the story. I tell you this not to discredit or belittle units on our right and left, but to prove that what the Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry there accomplished was far from easy and that when it came to defending Metz the enemy was decidedly on the job.

Bois Frehaut is a hilly, dense wood about five hundred yards east of the Moselle River, rising from low, flat, boggy land. This low ground extends around and eastward south of the wood, between it and the northern edge of East Pont-a-Musson, in the form of a broad swale gradually narrowing and rising from a point south of the center of the wood. This broad swale was no-man's land. Behind Bois Frehaut to the north enemy ground continued to rise, culminating in a very high hill or mountain overlooking the wood, no-man's land, Pont-a-Musson and the entire country for miles around. Near its summit was an exceptionally fine observation post, reached by a long tunnel.

In speaking of the action of Bois Frehaut or the capture of Bois Frehaut the places called Belle Aire Farm, Bois de la Tete d'Or and Ferme de Pence are included. They are parts of and join Bois Frehaut. This position was a separate and distinct place entirely surrounded by clear ground and most ideally situated for the enemy for defense purposes. My knowledge of what was done by units on our right

and left was gained during the action through my efforts to keep in touch with and to establish liaison with those units on our flanks.

On three separate occasions during the preceding four months Allied troops had attempted to capture this Bois Frehaut. Once a French outfit, after considerable artillery preparation, got into the edge of it by a turning movement and stayed about ten minutes. Later French Senegalese troops penetrated its east flank a short distance and stayed less than one hour. At the time American troops reduced the St. Mihiel Salient they made a frontal attack on Bois Frehaut and Ferme de Belle Aire, an outpost position in front of and about half as wide as the wood proper. This advance or pinch was supposed to start east of Bois Frehaut and take it with the big salient, but it had to pivot on Bois Frehaut instead of straightening the line from Momeny, for this was near Metz and one of the strong outlying centers defending it, so the attackers never got through the outside systems of wire. As a result of this the Allied first line on the west side of the river was several kilometers in advance

of our line on the east bank before we took Bois Frehaut and straightened it. I remember that as we went through the Ferme de Belle Aire wire I counted twenty-six American bodies or parts of bodies in one small section. They had been lying or hanging there since about September 13th.

Such, then, was the position the Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry, short two captains and nine lieutenants, its ranks badly thinned and the whole outfit dead tired, was ordered to capture and to hold. This was the morning of the ninth, the companies were widely separated, we were almost five miles behind our front line and we were to attack at five o'clock the next morning.

There was not a minute to lose. Early in the afternoon we were up in East Pont-a-Musson. We would spend the night completing our preparations there. Our first lines at the point where I had decided to leave them were just north of the edge of the town. From there, for several kilometers, they ran in a northeasterly direction, but my orders called for a *head-on* attack along the entire enemy front.

Prospective casualties for us seemed not to concern those of my superiors and their assistants who had laid down the general outline for this affair and for several previous affairs. I haven't time here to go into details as to that statement, but I assure you I am not telling anything imaginative or that I can not substantiate. I am saying little or nothing of any battalion or organization other than my own. What I say of it and things pertaining to it are not meant to apply to anything else. They are the result of personal knowledge and experience.

The commanding General had wished me luck and departed. The Lieutenant Colonel practically had put the regiment at my disposal and gone to Loisey. The whole thing was now up to us. There were a thousand things to think of and do and very little time in which to do them. I called the officers together and gave instructions about equipment of all sorts—ammunition, gas masks, sag paste, rations—things that had to be sent back for, and so on.

I sent for certain units of the Headquarters

Company, and annexed a part of the officers and men of the First Battalion. By the way, its Major had been killed by the Germans a few days before. I also sent for the Regimental Machine Gun Company, for I had a foreboding that the company of the Brigade Machine Gun Battalion designated to report to me in the orders would not arrive in time. So I played safe. Then I spent about two hours inspecting and watching the preparations go forward. At six P. M. I sat down to study in detail and to systematize our plan of attack. Everything must be thought out and arranged in advance. All contingencies must, if possible, be foreseen and provided for The foe we were going against was highly organized and knew his position. He was experienced, efficient and crafty in the art of war.

Promptly at eight-thirty, as ordered, the officers assembled at the house we were using as temporary Battalion Headquarters. The company from the Machine Gun Battalion had not arrived and for what we were about to undertake, machine guns were important. So I called Captain Allen and his lieutenants of our

Regimental Machine Gun Company into the conference. Had the other company arrived, Captain Allen of the company I had sent for on my own initiative, probably would not now be lying buried in France. So works fate, as some call it. It's a sad thing to have to order officers and men on missions of almost certain death, especially when they are so willing, even anxious to go, and when you know them as well as I knew mine, but such is war.

For hours in a dimly candle-lighted room we worked. Studied charts and blue prints, planned each move of each detachment and platoon in detail. Company and platoon commanders laid their courses, drew maps and studied them carefully, for they would have to travel independently and by compass after entering enemy wire. We carefully rehearsed our plans of liaison. In short, every detail was gone over; all emergencies we could conceive of were discussed, so that each captain and each platoon leader (some were non-coms.) knew his part and its relation to the whole. Each one explained aloud just what he was to do and when and how, and how such and such

developments were to affect his actions. For you must know that nothing but well-nigh faultless team work would enable us to accomplish our mission.

To capture and to hold this strong and seemingly impregnable key position under the big guns of the world renowned fortress of Metz, to say nothing of its other means of defense, with but one battalion and but five minutes' artillery preparation, did not mean to rush out with a whoop and sweep all before us. It required a thorough, practical knowledge gained by experience of all the complicated phases of trench and open warfare. It required officers and non-commissioned officers of iron nerve and cool judgment under fire, and brave troops of exceptional discipline and the finest training. Whether those higher up expected us to succeed or could have expected any battalion to succeed, I doubted. So I had made up my mind we would succeed.

At one thirty-five A. M. I received word by telephone from the Brigade Adjutant that Zero hour would be seven o'clock instead of five. At three A. M. I said, "I'm going to lead

you over and into that place. I'll be with you and I'm going to *stick*. I'll never come back except on orders from proper authority unless carried back unconscious or dead. This meeting is adjourned." For fully a minute they remained perfectly still—not one moved. Then one at a time they got up, shook my hand and filed out into the cold and darkness—the vast, ominous outdoors. And I knew then by the look on each leader's face that we would be annihilated or win.

They roused their men, for they had been ordered to get what rest they could, and there in the chill and dead of night, explained to them just what was to be done; explained each man's part, for each man has a part in a job like that. Certain things had arrived during the night. These were distributed, final inspections were made and by five o'clock all was in readiness for the start. The four companies of infantry, "H," "G," "E" and "F," the Regimental Machine Gun Company, the One-Pounder and Stokes Mortar Platoons, the Pioneer Platoon and Signal outfits from the Headquarters Company, the specialty detach-

ments from Division Headquarters, the Doctors and Stretcher Bearers—all were there lined up in battalion front, at increased intervals, along the great Metz road.

For a moment I paused, feeling or sensing, as it were, my Battalion, for I could see only the shadowy forms of a few who were nearest. I wondered if those at home knew or could have any realization of what these men were doing and suffering for them. All through that awful night I had heard not one word of complaint. Not a grumble had reached my ears, and I smiled as I remembered the many times before, even away back in the Argonne or St. Die (it seemed ages ago then), how, when I had approached within hearing of disconsolate looking groups of men, shivering all night long, perhaps in deep mud and cold rain, because of mistakes higher up or for unavoidable causes, some old fellow in the group had started to sing or said some silly thing intended to be funny and how all the others had *laughed* —for my benefit. And these were the men I was about to lead out there where it looked to all of us like sure annihilation. These were the

remnant of that Battalion, and I—, but the hour had come.

I started at the right of the line, which would be the rear when they swung into column, followed by my Adjutant, Lieutenant Pritchard. It was just before dawn, that most spookey and shivery of all hours—a few degrees above freezing, but the cold, fleecy mist that enveloped us seemed to penetrate our very bones. Just enough light was filtering through for me to recognize each officer and man as I walked slowly close to the line. Not a word was spoken —not a sound, save the never tearing *screech* of an occasional shell with its ugly blast, or the rattling, echoing *tat, tat, tat-a-tat!* of a machine gun or an automatic rifle in the distance.

Along the whole wide front I moved—sadly, looking into the face of each man, each so busy with his thoughts. How pinched, how tired—how worn they looked. Many cheeks were wet with tears. Each man made an effort to smile. Many chins and lips trembled. The very chill and the darkness seemed charged and potent with *death.* But every head was high. Every

form was rigidly erect. "They are just great children," I thought, "so proud in their sacrifice, so brave, so true in this awful preliminary hour —great trusting, innocent boys suffering for the sins and for the sakes of others, and mine the sad, oh, *unspeakably sad,* duty of leading them to death, or to horrors and suffering even worse." Had I not been going *with* them I could not have faced them then. I reached the end of the line. My staff and runners fell in behind me. The Captain of the leading company gave a signal, repeated down the line. They swung—*"Squads left!"* And the Death March had begun.

No band was playing, no colors flying, no loved ones and friends admiring, cheering—just on through the ghastly night—and I could feel the very heart beat of those twelve hundred and fifty brave men behind me as plainly as I could hear the muffled tread of their hob-nailed shoes. For I loved that Battalion. It was the pride of my life. And there was not one among all those hundreds of big, black heroes of mine that would not have gone through *hell* for his Major. And no one knew it better than I.

On, on, thump, thump, thump, up the familiar road, under the great bare trees, past the deserted, shell marked houses, and damp, tomb-like ruins that had once been happy homes. Then we were in the outskirts of the town. On the left was the arch, the big iron gate and the ruined house under which were the dug-outs of the battalion infirmary. Soon we were passing the Battalion graveyard to our right, with its rows of mounds and wooden crosses barely discernable.

And strangely enough, at a time like this, I thought of one very dark night, much darker than this, with flares and star shells and colored rockets lighting no-man's land, not far away, and the flash and roar of big guns and screaming shells, when we buried our first man there, killed the night we first moved into the sector. And I remembered how helpless and small he seemed as they gently laid him in his shallow grave, and then when we bent near to conceal the brief glare of a pocket flashlight, how *proud* he looked, with a great hole through his chest torn by a flying chunk of jagged steel, and only a blanket for a coffin, and the expression

of peace on the young black face, for he had stuck and died at his post. And then when the little, muddy grave was filled, how pitiful and how lonely he seemed, as we left him to darkness in that blood soaked foreign soil—so far from his loved ones and home.

Like thousands in that hellish war, he had made the supreme sacrifice, had unflinchingly laid down his life to save others. He was a true American soldier. I hope they still keep flowers on his grave.

I could see the very mound there on the end as we passed, for already a faint, cold brightness was breaking through the mist. On we marched, up and off the road, through the labyrinth of grave-like trenches, till at last we reached the broad maze of our most advance wire. New paths or openings had just been cut and men of the Battalion Scout Platoon were waiting to guide us through.

It was still impossible to see more than twenty -five or thirty yards through the fog, so with compas in hand I led the column through no-man's land like a skipper would pilot a

ship, among shell holes, through small gulleys, clumps of scrubby brush and patches of dead weeds, and as we neared and entered enemy wire, past ghastly, stinking objects that reminded us most keenly of the attempts our predecessors had made to do what we had to do. I also reflected, when I saw the head drop off of one as a man jarred the wire it hung over, that my own carcass or the carcasses of a king or even a queen, or of some wealthy notable, would look no better if it had been lying or hanging out in the weather for about twomonths with these horrible objects that had once been fine young American soldiers. (During the time we occupied the sector patrols had brought in and we had buried a number of these bodies.)

There was almost a mile of no-man's land at the point where we had crossed it, for we traveled on the lowest ground because the mist was denser there. But at last we had come to the acres of wire before the enemy outpost position called Belle Aire Farm, in French "Ferme de Belle Aire." This was several hundred yards in advance of Bois Frehaut, the main position, which occupied higher and rising ground. Part

of the battalion, led by Captain Green of "H" Company, which was to lead on the right, moved around to the east to take their places ready for the attack. The rest cut through the Belle Aire wire, one detachment cutting in on the flank to *bayonet* machine gunners, for we worked quietly at this stage, and we worked fast, taking advantage of the now rapidly thinning mist. This whole thing had been planned by us to outguess the enemy and in so far as possible to avoid casualties, for dead and wounded men can not take and hold positions such as that.

It was at this point that I saw two of my men knocked over by machine gun fire, the first to fall in this affair, and as we hugged the ground waiting for our flanking party to reward those machine gunners, I could have dictated quite a story, had there been any one to take it down, on the subject of Militarism and War in general. I wondered how many wars there'd be and how long they'd last if the people who profit by them or hope to profit by them had to be up there with us. I was in a nasty mood, as I usually was, when I thought of

most any phase of the war except of the glorious men who personally faced the *real* danger and who did the actual fighting. I doubt whether that story, as I would have dictated it then, would be very popular with people who didn't honestly and actually suffer in or because of the war, or with those who think they believe in militarism and war.

We were not delayed long. Then with Belle Aire Farm behind us, we rapidly deployed and took up our formation in platoon and half platoon columns facing and about one hundred yards from the wire of the main position. The entire command took cover in shell holes, in depressions, behind mounds or clusters of dead weeds ready to spring forward in force at the proper moment. I had time to make sure that all was in readiness as planned and get back to the center. The mist had lifted and enemy machine gunners near the edge of the wood, especially those with nests in trees, were blazing away recklessly.

Promptly at six fifty-five (all watches had been synchronized) our big guns, miles behind us, almost simultaneously began to bark and

boom. Then came the shells, a low moaning roar at first, the sound rising in pitch something like a slowly operated steam siren whistle, then increasing in volume and shrillness till it seemed like a mighty tornado coming right at us. The noise was so great and so sudden that it was almost unbearable. Then they began to explode all along, most of them just in front of us. Words are utterly inadequate to describe this awful cataclysm as it felt and seemed to us.

We had figured that the enemy would drop his barrage first in front of Belle Aire Farm. That's why we had gotten through that position so hastily and it was fortunate that we advanced as far as we did even at the risk of being too close to our own barrage, for almost immediately the dirt and rocks began to fly behind us —not in front of the Belle Aire wire, but right on the position itself. Some one had been telephoning. We were too close to our own barrage, but I knew it would advance in a few minutes, and the enemy barrage was entirely too close behind us. Talk about being between two fires. A curtain of fire from our own artillery just ahead of us and a wall of the most intense

and concentrated fire from batteries guarding Metz falling immediately in our rear, the shells passing each other not far above our heads. A few from each side fell short.

To be killed or rendered unconscious is easy, but to have to live through a situation like that right out in the open is beyond all power to describe. Our chances for survival and success hung in the balance, the suspense was maddening. The enemy barrage would soon be lowered in front of the main wire—right where we were. It might be lowered any second. I decided that if he lowered it we would rush into our own barrage rather than stay where we were, for as many of us as possible must get through that wire.

I kept looking at my watch, ready to give the signal that would be relayed along our line. It was six fifty-eight, then finally six fifty-eight and a half; at last it got to be six fifty-nine. If that enemy barrage lowered then, our casualties would be enormous and our chances for success almost gone. It was bad enough as it was. That was the longest minute I ever spent.

Promptly at seven, as scheduled, our bar-

rage jumped and in a few seconds practically all of our shells were falling beyond the wire. This was our time to get through and quickly, if ever. All along the front our boys went for those entanglements. Talk about wire entanglements. They had recently been repaired and strengthened. Most of the wire was the heavy new German type, with barbs an inch and a half long and less than an inch apart. It required heavy two-handed cutters with handles two and a half feet long to cut it. Small cutters were useless for cutting here. The wide belts were not only criss-crossed back and forth in all directions on stakes and on cheveaux-de-frise, but woven in every conceivable way as high as a man's head back among the trees.

There were pits and trenches with wire thrown in loose and in coils covered with light limbs and leaves for men to fall into. We had no tanks. They set off mines, many of which blew holes sixty to seventy feet in diameter. Grenades and bombs were suspended from limbs and in the brush in such a way that stepping on or touching a certain stick or wire would explode them. Machine guns were placed

at varying distances back in the wood, some on little camoflaged platforms in trees, some in trenches and some in cement "pill boxes" located so as to sweep and enfilade every section of the wire.

High ranking officers from the rear as well as low ranking ones who swarmed up to visit the place after the armistice were amazed at the strength of the position, and when they saw it at close range the predominant question was, "How did they ever get through?" And they only saw it from the outside edge, for no one was allowed into the wood. It was saturated with gas for days.

The entire Bois Frehaut, which means Frehaut Woods, was wired every few hundred yards in front of trench systems and enfilading machine guns. There were deep rocky ravines, steep hills, large patches of heavy undergrowth filled with wire, traps, mines and pitfalls of every description, also magnificent dugouts and a most complete system of 'phone and signal lines.

The platoons and half platoons went through in single file, strong men in front taking turns

at cutting wire and those behind bending back or securing the loose ends as well as possible with the small cutters. There was from a hundred and fifty to two hundred yards interval between detachments. It was impossible for them to see each other after entering the wood, so that until their objectives were reached each outfit to all intents and purposes was an independent command.

Practically every one had penetrated the first or outer entanglements when the enemy laid his barrage right on us. The first men through were going after the machine guns and snipers that were bothering them most, crawling around behind or flanking them, using hand grenades and bayonets, firing with automatic rifles and taking pot shots at those in trees. Being through the first system of wire we could scatter somewhat and take advantage of shell holes, trenches, even hollows.

But how any one lived under that fire is still a mystery to me. Enemy artillery had gotten word by telephone or airplane, probably both, that we were into the wood, and had decided to end us right there. Stones, dirt, schrapnel,

limbs and whole trees filled the air. The noise and concussion alone were enough to kill one. Talk about shell shock. The earth swayed and shook and fairly bounced with the awful impact. Flashes of fire, the metallic crack of high explosives, the awful explosions that dug holes fifteen and twenty feet in diameter, the utter and complete pandemonium and the stench of hell, your friends blown to bits, the pieces dropping near—even striking you. If anything can be more terrifying, more nerve-breaking in this world than a concentrated fire from heavies such as that, I am unable to conceive of it. It's many times worse than the worst thing one can imagine. It can't be described because there is nothing you have experienced, unless the thing itself, with which to compare it.

There were many guns defending Metz and this was a concentration of heavy caliber fire—we were the only ones advancing just then. After what semed a lifetime he lowered it still more to the point where our barrage was dropping ahead of us, then it slowly crept back over us to the Belle Aire wire. Several times it passed over us, rather on us, in this combing

process, before we reached our goal. Other batteries were shelling our back areas and still others were shelling us promiscuously.

But the boys kept on, taking advantage of any available cover at times, but resuming, silencing machine guns that still were active, bombing dugouts and bayoneting or shooting all the enemy that had lingered too long. Only by special effort did I secure three live Huns.

By nine thirty-five all platoons assigned to the first line, but two, were represented on the line of our objectives. As prearranged this word reached me through runners. The two outfits had been delayed by machine gun nests, but they soon came up. By ten o'clock liaison was fully established, combat groups had been located and were digging in, machine guns and trench mortars were being placed, and in other ways we were getting ready to withstand counter attacks as well as artillery fire, which, if we held, soon would include more gas. I had sent two platoons of the support company to help protect our right flank, which was the eastern edge of the wood.

So I wrote a message, put it into the small

aluminum shell on the leg of a pigeon. The man released him and we watched him rise and circle, then head southward with word for the Commanding General fifteen miles back at Division Headquarters in Marbache that Bois Frehaut was ours—all objectives reached, were holding and would continue to hold.

Then I took my staff and Artillery Liaison officers and my runners and went back to a prearranged locality in the edge of the wood and established my permanent headquarters or P. C. in an open shell hole. A few men set to work with spades and picks to shape it up and give it a little level floor space.

A Bosch airplane appeared over the edge of the wood flying low and saw us. He circled a few times and dropped out some signals. In just four minutes by my watch we heard two big shells, one just behind the other, coming right at us. After a few months' experience you get so you can tell from the sound just about where a shell is going to hit. One of these struck twenty-five yards beyond us, the other almost the same distance to our left. In less than a minute we heard two more coming the

same route. One struck twenty yards short, the other not quite so short, but a little to the right. They had the range. The guns were five and a half or six miles away.

After the sixth shot had just missed I ordered everybody out of the hole. They occupied others a short distance away. The airplane, so low that the men were shooting at it with their rifles, noted this scattering, but he evidently noted, too, that I had remained, so the firing continued. I felt a sort of pride about sticking to my headquarters. The thirty-sixth shell fired at it struck right near the edge and covered me up. Oh, yes, I was given energetic assistance in getting out. We cleaned out the hole and resumed business. Now that the airplane had signaled "a hit" and gone, it was as safe as any other place in that locality.

People said it seemed miraculous that with so many big shells fired at it and hitting on all sides in such a small area, each one had failed to hit directly in that big hole. But I was not conceited enough to think that the Huns were firing shells that curved by magic for my special benefit. I had estimated during the "Death

March" just before dawn that I had one chance in three of coming through that operation alive and one in twelve of escaping serious wounds or gassing. I believed in God all right, but I did not think then and do not now believe that He was down there taking an active part in that horrible orgy of suffering and destruction. I felt that if anything other than vain humanity was fighting on or with either side it must be his Satanic Majesty. I was not trying to palm off on God the things that be Caesar's. However—well, that calls for another lecture. But don't any of you get an idea that I'm trying to belittle true religion. I think it's the greatest thing by far in the word or accessible to the world today.

This little digression about something besides the battle, I suppose, is the result of a habit I got into in the front lines of thinking when things were unusually dangerous and there was nothing to do but let it work for the time being, of something pleasant and wholly unassociated with the nasty business in hand.

I remember how Lieutenant Stuart, my Battalion Scout Officer (he was half Indian)

when we had finished discussing the details of a patrolling expedition he was going to lead in a few minutes—and it took a lot of nerve to prowl around no-man's land in the dead of night—would pause, then with a broad smile and chuckling, a little, would tell me some trifling story, usually about something that occurred when he was a small child away back in Arizona. Then, still grinning and chuckling, he'd get up and say: "Well, Major, it's time to pull out. The boys are waiting. See you as soon as I get back." I never felt right sure he'd come back.

My Adjutant, too, when we'd be waiting for some terrible thing to happen during the night, expecting an assault, shells dropping promiscuously and perhaps a bombing plane buzzing overhead, used to tell some of the most outlandish stories of his experiences while a regular in Hawaii or the Philippines or some place. I suppose all men exposed to real danger had some way of "kidding" themselves along under most any conditions. If they didn't have they were in a bad way.

Soon after I was resurrected from the shell

hole a runner from the right front company (by the way, he was sighted in Division orders and should have had a medal for the way he got to me) stumbled in exhausted, with a note from Green (who, under machine gun fire, had climbed a tree to get a better view) advising me that the enemy was preparing in force to rush our right flank. Two platoons, one from the support, the other from the Reserve Company, and my two remaining reserve machine guns had barely time to reach the spot to which they were ordered when the assault started. By flanking our would-be flankers as they came over a ridge, they saved the day. Several attacks against our front failed to succeed because of well directed fire.

And still the bombardment continued without a pause. It seemed to me that almost all the big guns that side of Metz were firing on Bois Frehaut and the old no-man's land just behind it. And I learned afterward that they were, for we were the only ones that had taken and were holding any special territory. They had been expecting a drive on Metz for some time and their artillery especially was well pre-

pared. Shrapnel and high explosive contact shells of all sizes fell on all parts of the area. They knew more about the armistice than we did and his artillery seemed to want to do all the damage it could while the war lasted. Just before dark on the tenth he began throwing over great quantities of gas and continued to mix it in all night long. They seemed determined to run us out or exterminate us.

For twenty-eight long hours we advanced and *held* under a bombardment that in my opinion had not been surpassed if equalled on a similar area held by American troops during a similar length of time. The enemy had allowed the Allies some time before to get as close to Metz as he intended they should get—that was the outside wire of Bois Frehaut. We were not attacking in great force after hours of artillery preparation with almost innumerable big guns supporting us, though what artillery was in action behind us did excellent work. Neither was the enemy fighting a rear guard action while his main forces beat a hasty retreat.

At ten o'clock the night of the tenth I re-

ceived a copy of orders indicating that a battalion was to enter the western part of the wood during the night and advance on the enemy through my left front company, "G," at five o'clock next morning. I smiled in my gas mask, for I had watched the efforts of a certain battalion backed by another battalion, to come up into the woods during the afternoon. They got as far as Ferme de Belle Aire—part of them—and at dark withdrew. Very early the morning of the eleventh the "attacking" battalion got within the outer wire of Bois Frehaut. By five A. M. two officers and a handful of men had worked their way as far as the headquarters of a certain "G" Company platoon. Our barrage started on the dot. The two officers, followed by the handful of men, advanced beyond our front line and looked about. One of the officers was promptly wounded, and—well there was no attack.

During that entire twenty-eight hours Signal Outfits from Division Headquarters were trying to get a telephone line up to my P. C. But the wire was always either shot in two or the men were and I had no 'phone until after

the armistice. It was almost impossible for runners to get between me and our old front lines behind us, and still more difficult for my runners to get between me and my own Company and Platoon leaders in the woods. But they did it.

All day, all night and up to eleven o'clock next morning it lasted. By midnight the entire wood fairly reeked with gas. No one dared eat or drink because of it. Despite all our precautions and efforts, we were rapidly being wiped out. I have heard of officers and of men and of units—large ones and small ones, white and also colored, that became panic stricken and useless under fire that was feeble and light both in intensity and duration compared to this, but I am ready at any time to testify that twelve hundred and fifty officers and men (colored) *did* advance and that the command did hold *without showing the faintest symptoms of panic or retreat.*

All of you who were with the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry prior to September twenty-third, 1918, know Colonel Vernon A. Caldwell of West Point and the Regular

Army. He organized and commanded the Regiment until he was made a Brigadier General and left us on the date named. To him I attribute much of the credit for our success in taking and holding Bois Frehaut. He had taught us "simple and direct means and methods" and had taught us to "think tactics" in a way that proved of inestimable value under the supreme test. For Colonel Caldwell was one of our professional officers who did not have to pose as a "disciplinarian" to get by.

You might like to know about that action from the standpoint of tactics and how it was that many of us survived without permanent injury. It is very interesting. I wish I might explain it in detail. To me it is more interesting from the standpoint of courage, efficiency and unswerving devotion to duty displayed by both officers and men. It was a fitting climax to an enviable battalion record of front line service, and an accomplishment most creditable to the American Army and to its colored soldiers.

I wish I had time to tell you of the many especially glorious deeds of heroism performed

by officers and men. I use the word *glorious,* for to me, even that is a weak word to use in describing the heroic actions of a man utterly and deliberately, premeditatedly indifferent to his personal safety and bent solely on duty plus a desire to help and save others. And to me, too, that is the only thing about war, unless it is the fortitude of those left at home in suspense and unselfishly doing all in their power to help, that comes any way near being *glorious.*

If they'd only kill them outright instead of leaving them to suffer and die in agony perhaps hours (even months) later. To see them suffering and be powerless to help them, and to know that many might be saved if it were possible to stop the slaughter long enough to give them proper medical attention. Many men died in Bois Frehaut or afterward who might have been saved, could they have been promptly and properly attended. What a hell of a game for *Christian* nations to be playing and getting ready to play again, in the Twentieth Century A. D.

One little scene has bobbed up in my memory

—the death of an "E" Company Runner. Late on the afternoon of the tenth I left my P. C. to get a view of a certain position. I had gone but a short distance when I stepped on something that attracted by attention. It was a human hand! Near it was a large spot of blood and a trail as though something had been dragged in the general direction of where our First Aid Dressing Station had been before it was blown up. My course lay a little to the right, but I followed the gruesome marks for about fifty yards and there huddled up in a little gulley laid the "E" Company Runner I had sent out with a message for Captain Sanders about two hours before.

Not only was his right arm off at the elbow, but his right side and leg were badly mangled. I thought he was dead, but bent over and put my hand on his forehead. His eyes opened. In them was a wistful, faraway look. I spoke, and with an apparent effort he got them focused, they brightened with recognition, and immediately, almost to my undoing, his body straightened! His right shoulder and the stub of an arm jerked! Utterly helpless, trembling on the very brink of eternity, he

had come to "Attention" and had *saluted* his Major!

Then I noticed he was making a pitiful effort to talk, and in some way, I can't explain just how, I got the impression that there was something in his pocket he wished to see. I took out a wallet and found what I knew he wanted. It was a post-card photo of a pretty colored girl holding in her arms a dark, smiling baby. Shells were screeching over. Just then one tore the earth nearby and sprinkled us with dirt. I propped his head against my knee and held the picture close to his eyes. A proud, satisfied look came into them, then a calm, tired smile. He seemed looking farther and farther away. Another terrific, bouncing jar and the bloody, mud smeared form relaxed. Another brave comrade had "gone west."

A little farther on I saw a big private leaning against the splintered trunk of a tree, his bowels all hanging out. No one else was near. He seemed to be in delirium and was crying pitifully like a little child for "Mamma." When he saw me he stared for an instant, then jumped

up and yelled, "Major Ross is with us! Go to it, boys!" and fell over—dead. Then I thought about all I had heard to the effect that you have to treat soldiers like dogs—especially colored ones—to gain discipline and inspire respect. I thanked God I didn't have to.

I might tell you how that morning during the advance, I happened to be looking at a non-com. section leader a little way to my left when there was a wicked crack and a blinding flash just above and in front of him, and how I saw his headless body—the blood gushing—actually step and lunge forward against a rock. I could tell you about strong men who went raving mad (and were still insane when I last heard) in that horrible turmoil. I could tell for hours about awful things in Bois Frehaut—let alone previous experiences in other places—the days were bad but the long weird nights. They are too gruesome, too sickening to talk about long at a time even here where we're all safe, rested and well. No wonder the men who actually, personally underwent such suffering won't talk about it much. But the memory of those awful things, pass it off as they may, is seared

deep into their very souls and will haunt them at times until their dying day.

There were people in America and also in France who wore officers' uniforms and had the time of their lives and there were some who, if there is justice to come, will surely pay for their ridiculous arrogance during and following the war. Militarism is one of the disgusting institutions I fought to help eliminate. Yes, it will be eliminated—and prevented. At a glance just now on the surface, in most nations, things look much as before. The same old gang is in control, but lying and allying, brow beating, scheming a little more than was necessary heretofore. Since the World War (the result of worldly success and money worship) started in 1914, things have happened. For instance, the acceleration of the change in woman's status. Votes are merely a result of that change. This phase alone, and what goes with it—the new state of sex affairs—*necessitates* and will help bring about a changing of human viewpoint.

Whether or not certain persons and classes of persons like it, Democracy is in the world to

stay, and staying will increase and flourish as the people learn. Reversion for the masses to ignorance, feudalism, slavery is unthinkable—impossible. Is the Almighty God a human fool? Has humanity ever or will it ever get away with the assumption that He is? Think of those fine young victims I mentioned lying in and hanging on the wire in front of Belle Aire Farm.

More important than militarism and war, or than politics, or than how to acquire fortunes, or than anything else is the learning—not just about it—but *how to attain* righteousness, peace, contentment, true happiness. I put righteousness first for there'll be none of those things humanity longs for without it. There'll be plenty of hypocrisy, but not much genuine righteousness until more of us get our minds, our hearts, our aspirations set on something higher than materialism and worldliness. You can not *legislate* righteousness into the hearts of humanity.

A host of thinking people are beginning to suspicion this to such an extent that they are interested in finding out the truth—the *remedy.*

Now there are persons rushing about, others lying in wait to tell you the "truth." Or they will hand you a pamphlet or sell you a book or refer you to one written by some person who makes great claims or insinuations about having "inside information." There may be enough truth to it to fool the thoughtless or credulous and it may be insidious enough to worry even the wise. There are several that make startling claims, but none have *yet* overcome any material laws. There are numerous courses of study and "systems," not claiming to be Christian or religious, that guarantee to, and no doubt do, help you in business, add to your success, cure your ailments—some of them—and benefit your health.

Almost innumerable panaceas for all ills are advanced. Some of those religionists and uplifters with the "inside information" and "special revelations," etc., may be sincere and many people may believe whatever it is. The same is true of the Turks and the South Sea Island Head-Hunters.

But in so far as I can find out there never lived on this earth but *one Man* who taught the

things we need to and want to know about—who absolutely lived up to them Himself and who proved them and demonstrated them beyound all peradventure. You will find by honest, careful study, expermient and thought that these things and these alone are *practical.* That Man was born in a stable, died on a cross and left an estate consisting of the clothes He wore. He's the man who said, "Love your enemies." "Lay up your treasures in Heaven." "My Kingdom is not of this world." "If you love me, keep my commandments or sayings." "Except a man be born again . . . ." "By their fruits shall ye know them," etc., etc. And He's the One Christendom claims to follow.

Fortunately certain men who knew Him personally and others who knew His Apostles personally wrote about Him—what He said and what He *did.* Some of those writings were gotten together and compiled into a book. That book is called "The New Testament." Now with all due respect and consideration for the motives and intentions of many of those who have since written, some of whom claim or infer "special" or "inside" information, I hum-

bly suggest that the logical, safe, reliable place for each of us to learn about Christ is in the New Testament. Let's find out whether He really said anything applicable and worth while *now,* whether He meant it, whether He lived it and proved it, and, above all, let us stick to it until we find out *what it was and is.* The world needs it badly—needs it pure and undiluted, unadulterated—needs to know what it is without concessions and without reservations. If the people are smart enough to govern themselves (and I think they are and that they're improving in that ability right along) they are now at last smart enough to study the New Testament itself by themselves and for themselves. How can any Christian logically object to that?

The only solution for humanity's problems and difficulties lies in a *correct* understanding of the teachings of Christ—not some vanity tickling subterfuge. Some persons think they know all about it now. No human is raising the dead or stilling the tempest these days and that "know it all" attitude is the result of fleshly vanity—not knowledge. So let's start or re-

view, beginning in the primary grade or the kindergarten. Many seem to have started in the post-graduate courses or at least in the senior class. I have a suspicion that selfishness, vanity, swell headedness, worldly pride, material ambition (whether called material or not), and so on, are the direct opposite to Christianity.

I thought I knew a lot about religion, but after they led me out of Bois Frehaut I started in in the primary grade to try to learn about Christianity—so to speak. The world must learn *what it is,* then begin learning to apply it or live it. It will be done. The churches will help. They'll help or quit. Many of them are about through now. But Christianity as Christ taught it won't quit. It will soon be the paramount subject of conversation and consideration. The world has reached a stage of material advancement. The people are awake, enlightened and organized to such an extent that things will become unbearable—impossible without it.

I couldn't very well leave out all mention of Christianity in this lecture, for the things my

Battalion fought to help make possible and to bring about in the world are in one sense closely allied to Christianity. There couldn't be much real Christianity without Democracy and there can't be any real Democracy without Christianity. I don't claim to be much of a Christian, but I wish I had time to tell you what I think it is, and why I think so and what *makes* me think so, and so on. You look into it yourselves. And now we must get out of Bois Frehaut.

Not until ten-thirty o'clock on the morning of November eleventh did I receive orders relative to an armistice. The third runner sent out got through to me with a Division order. I was in direct command of the principal advancing done in attempts on the tenth and eleventh toward Metz and this was the first definite word I had about the armistice. We had heard that such a thing was expected but I supposed it would be several days, maybe weeks, before it went into effect. We knew that German officers had gone through the lines under a flag of truce to meet representatives of the High Allied Command, but we did not know

what the result of those parleys had been. Some thought hostilities would not cease for months.

Therefore, imagine our joy in that unbearable shellhole, when we found the war had but *thirty minutes* to last. Of those with me at the time some shouted for happiness and some stared in amazement fearing it was too good to be true. I sent the word out to my leaders and sat looking at my watch. Artillery fire increased in intensity if any difference and enemy machine gunners elevated their pieces and were spraying the wood with bullets. It would have been hard luck to get hit then. Promptly at eleven o'clock all fire began to lessen and in a few minutes had ceased. The World War had stopped.

Not only our men but the Germans also seemed overjoyed. Soon after the buglers had sounded "cease firing" the Huns rushed out of their positions and our men met them between the lines. They actually shook hands and slapped each others backs. They traded trinkets and were holding a veritable reception until our officers succeeded in getting the men

back into the lines. I wouldn't believe it if I hadn't seen it.

During the afternoon I received word that our Lieutenant-Colonel, commanding the Regiment, together with some members of his staff, had been badly gassed in a dugout at Regimental Headquarters and forced to go to the hospital and that I, being next in rank, was temporarily in command of the Regiment. My face was so swollen that I could see a little only with one eye. My ears had been bleeding and I had to be yelled at to hear. I was scratched and bruised and my voice refused to work. A sort of reaction had set in and I felt weak and sick. We passed a row of dead and pieces of dead and some more dead and finally reached the limousine that had been sent for me.

We were proceeding slowly because of shell holes in the road when one of the men with me said, "There's a man ahead singing and waving his arms like he's crazy." I could see that he was rared back and singing or yelling and every few steps he stopped and waved his arms and executed some strange dance movements. When we overtook him I stopped the car and

asked him what was the matter. "Sir—Major," he said, his eyes beaming, "I-I just can't praise God enough for letting me come out of that woods alive."

The outfit was too tired to move far that day. But the next morning the regimental band came to me in a body and asked permission to march up the road a mile or so to meet the Second Battalion, which under my orders was coming to Loisey, where there were comfortable billets, to rest. I walked out into the village square, as Regimental Commander, to welcome my heroic battalion—the battalion that had *earned* undying fame for itself, its regiment, its brigade, its division and for the American colored race.

Soon I heard the band playing as it never played before and they came into view marching up the main street of the town. There at the head, limping and dirty, was my big senior captain, Sanders. Farther back I could recognize Green, captain of "H," stocky and ragged, marching abreast of his company guide. Others I noticed, and the absence of others, and many thoughts flashed through

my mind as I watched them marching toward me.

Sanders saw me and knew what to do. I never gave many fancy orders, it wasn't necessary in that outfit. When the middle of the column was opposite he bawled in a hoarse voice — but they, too, knew what to do — "Squads left — March! Battalion — Halt!" Those heels clicked. Their rifles, like one piece, in three clear-cut movements, snapped down to the "order." Again he yelled, or tried to yell, "Present, arms!" Again two distinct and snappy movements. Sanders faced about standing at salute and there before me at "present arms"—not much larger than one company should be, stood all that was left of my wonderful Second Battalion!—My heroes of Bois Frehaut!

Note: Many were wholly incapacitated for many days, whose names were not turned in in final reports of "casualties."

I brought them to the "order" and stood spell bound. It was by far the most touching, the most thrilling, the most awe-inspiring ceremony I ever experienced or witnessed. There

they stood — covered with mud, stained and spattered with blood, their clothes, what was left of them, torn and ripped to shreds. They looked emaciated—haggard, but about those erect, motionless figures, those big steady eyes, about their whole proud, manly bearing was something of that true nobility of unselfishness and sacrifice that is beyond description.

These men had suffered the tortures of the damned. They had faced all the engines of terror and destruction that fiendish man could invent. They had endured the shriek, the smash, the roar and pandemonium of hell. They had seen their comrades blown to bits or torn and mangled, and choked by gas. They had listened, powerless to help, through long, ghastly hours, to the pitiful, heart-breaking moans of the wounded and dying.

Yes, they had been tried, they had been tested, they had been weighed in the balance, they had been through a fiery crucible—and they were true gold. For many hard, long, weary weeks they had suffered and endured, and all for what they believed to be the preservation of our country, the advancement of

Democracy and the betterment of mankind. I stood there looking, thinking — torn and choked by emotion—thrilled with admiration, and a feeling rapidly growing that I would make my soldiers a speech—an oration. But *what* could I say? How could I say it? What could anyone in my place *say?* After several attempts I moved closer and whispered as loudly as I could, "Officers and men, your Major is proud of his Battalion!"

APPENDIX

History will concern itself as nearly as possible with *facts*. Relative to the World War the world believes and will believe what is stated by those who were in supreme authority and by those whose business it is dispassionately — mercilessly to ascertain and state the truth. Statements or accounts to the contrary, or that do not coincide, are merely ridiculous and can not stand.

Commonplace, every-day occurrences, occurrences that had no unusual bearing on anything of special importance, occurrences that were not exceptional, feats that were not particularly noteworthy from the standpoint of things as a whole, attempts that were not successful or were only partly successful—or if they cannot be logically and adequately proved — no matter how tremendous and how commendable they may be and may seem to those directly concerned—do not interest or convince very many, certainly not the general public—even now, and, of course, never will.

All accounts of American colored soldiers in France lay much stress on the Ninety-second Division's attack, just preceding the armistice, on the defenses of Metz—conceded to be the most impregnable inland fortress or position in the world. To attack the world's strongest fortress *means* something, and if you attain any actual, clear cut, unquestionable success, and if the world knows about it, it means a great deal. Especially in a Democracy is public opinion of importance.

At the time this attack was launched, namely, the morning of November 10th, 1918, the Division had had sufficient experience in the line and was sufficiently well organized and equipped to be taken seriously as a combat Division. But, unfortunately, our activities against the defenses and under the guns of Metz, coming, as they did, immediately preceding the cessation of hostilities, a time when so much of interest and importance was transpiring, received little if any general publicity.

But, imagine my state of mind, having made a lecture to two colored audiences and having told my white friends about the wonderful ac-

complishments of my Colored Battalion, when I read an Associated Press article sent out from Washington which contained a paragraph in a letter credited to General John J. Pershing, which read as follows: "The Ninety-second Division, astride the Moselle, attacked at 7 a. m., November 10th and at 5 a. m., November 11th, advanced a short distance, but the troops had retired to cover in the face of repeated heavy fire when the commander of the attacking Brigade received information at 7:18 a. m. that an armistice would be effective. . . . ." etc.

My friends or any one's friends reading or hearing of this statement credited to the Commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Forces would believe that the colored soldiers of the Ninety-second Division (the only complete colored combat division) had *attempted* something against the fortifications of Metz but that they had ***FAILED!***

It made Bois Frehaut a hoax. It made me a liar. It made any colored citizen a laughing stock who spoke of the great deeds and *accomplishments* of colored soldiers under the guns of Metz.

Generalizations, even if authentic, are not *convincing*. Sweeping summaries about units differently engaged at different times and places change few opinions. Something specific, complete in itself, *satisfactorily provable to the skeptical* must be shown, so it seemed up to me to secure and to preserve for the American colored soldier and for the American Negro, the credit for a most exceptional and glorious *achievement*. Immediately I wrote to a member of Congress, Hon. Will R. Wood, sent the extract from the Indianapolis Sunday Star of January 11th, 1920, and also the facts about the Ninety-second Division's drive toward Metz.

After General Pershing had returned to Washington, following his tour of inspection, and had had the records fully looked into he wrote a letter to Mr. Wood dated March 1st, 1920. Mr. Wood sent the letter to me. General Pershing said that the paragraph as published was incorrect — that what he actually said in his letter was: "The Ninety-second Division, astride the Moselle attacked at 7 a. m., November 10th, and at 5 a. m., November 11th,

renewed the attack. The renewed attack started at 5 a. m., November 11th advanced a short distance, but the troops had retired to cover in the face of reported heavy fire. . . . ." etc.

Even this statement, while perfectly true as to the attempts to advance on November 11th, gives a general impression of failure on the part of the Division in its advance toward Metz. It does not, however, make it impossible or untrue that the key position, Bois Frehaut, was captured in its entirety on the 10th and *continuously held* until the armistice went into effect. The holding was really of more importance than the capturing. The orders were "capture and hold" and great emphasis was laid on the "hold." But General Pershing goes on most fully and justly, as you will note, to state and show that the Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry did *take* and did *hold* the Bois Frehaut, and that *this Battalion fully accomplished* its mission.

The General's letter was published as part of an article, under the heading, "Pershing

Sends Correct Report," in the Indianapolis Star of March 9th, 1920. It was also copied in other papers. The letter in full follows:

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

March 1, 1920.

My dear Mr. Wood:

I regret that my absence from Washington has delayed this reply to your letter of January 17th enclosing a letter of January 12th from Major Ross.

Major Ross quotes a paragraph from a letter written by me as published in the "Indianapolis Star" and objects to this paragraph as unjust in so far as his battalion (2nd Battalion, 365th Infantry) is concerned. As quoted by Major Ross the paragraph to which he objects reads as follows:

"The 92nd Division, astride the Moselle, attacked at 7 a. m., November 10th and at 5 a. m., November 11th, advanced a short distance, but the troops had retired to cover in the face of repeated heavy fire when the commander of the

attacking Brigade received information at 7:18 a. m. that an armistice would be effective at 11 a. m. The Brigade Commander reports that he ordered all firing stopped by 10:45 a. m. and that the firing was so stopped."

The above quotation is incorrect. The paragraph as actually written in my letter of November 21st was as follows:

"The 92nd Division, astride the Moselle, attacked at 7 a. m., November 10th and at 5 a. m., November 11th, renewed the attack. The renewed attack started at 5 a. m., November 11th, advanced a short distance, but the troops had retired to cover in the face of reported heavy fire when the commander of the attacking Brigade received information at 7:18 a. m. that an armistice would be effective at 11 a. m. The Brigade Commander reports that he ordered all firing stopped by 10:45 a. m. and that the firing was so stopped."

You will note that in the correct paragraph the reference to the retirement of troops relates solely to the *renewed* attack started at 5 a. m., November 11th and does not concern the attack of November 10th. I think a careful

examination of Major Ross's letter shows that his statements as to the work of his battalion do not assert that any advance was made by the 2nd Battalion on November 11th. Examination of the records shows that the 2nd Battalion did take the Bois Frehaut on November 10th and that this battalion held this position until the armistice went into effect.

The orders issued by the 183rd Brigade on the evening of November 10th for the operation of November 11th contemplated putting the 1st Battalion of the 365th into position in the western part of Bois Frehaut and—"the 2nd Battalion, 365th Infantry will be held in support in its present position in the Bois Frehaut." This clearly shows that the 2nd Battalion, 365th Infantry, was not expected to attack on November 11th; and taken with other evidence shows that the 2nd Battalion, 365th Infantry, held, on November 11th, the positions which it had gained on November 10th.

The actual statements made by me in my letter of November 21st were correct, based on the reports of the several commanders, and I think that Major Ross will agree that there

is nothing in what I have said that reflects in any way upon the work of the 2nd Battalion, 365th Infantry. That battalion appears to have done what was expected of it on November 10th and on November 11th. As shown in the quotation I have given above from the order issued November 10th for the operation of November 11th, the 2nd Battalion was in support and was not in the attacking line on the morning of November 11th.

I am enclosing herewith the papers enclosed with your letter of January 17th.

Very sincerely,
(Signed) John J. Pershing.

The Honorable Will R. Wood,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D. C.

In view of the general opinion prevailing among American forces in France, and the impression of the American public at large relative to the Ninety-second Division's drive toward Metz also relative to its experience in the Argonne as represented by the Three Hundred

and Sixty-eighth Infantry in the attacking line, it seemed to me advisable to state what the result was of work done by attacking units, other than the Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry, in the advance on Metz fortifications on November 10th and 11th. It is especially well that I mentioned them since General Pershing says in effect (and the General knows and is regarded as an authority) that the Second Battalion, Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry *fully accomplished* its mission, and also that attacks made on the 11th "advanced a short distance, but had retired to cover. . . . ."

No doubt, before reading my lecture, *some* were of the opinion that the Ninety-second Division was rushing with irresistible force past and over strong points, regardless of all defenses, sweeping all before it and was only prevented from battering down the walls of the city of Metz itself by the armistice. As nearly every soldier, from General Pershing down, knows and as the final battle line as compared with the line on November 9th clearly proves, such was not the case. Had I indulged in glit-

tering generalities to that effect, had I even inferred it, or had I left an impression that all units concerned, accomplished their missions, that is, succeeded in carrying out their orders, I would lay myself open to serious and just criticism, for as leader of the attack on the key position, which was the central position, it was my business to *know* what happened on my front and on my flanks. I would be considered untruthful or at least an exaggerator, and all that I have said, if it has any effect at all, would detract from rather than add to the credit due the American colored soldier.

"Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War," written and compiled by Emmett J. Scott, special assistant to the Secretary of War, contains the general reports, less appendices and details, of the Commander of the Ninety-second Division and of the Commander of the One Hundred and Eighty-third Brigade relative to operations of November 10th and 11th. For your convenience I shall cite pages in Dr. Scott's work.

I said something to the effect that the battalion of the white division on the left of the

367th's front attacked, lost about 156 men in a few minutes and retired. I also said that the 367th Infantry on our left—just across the Moselle failed to accomplish its mission.

Page 151, Brigade Report, "At 10:30 a. m. a message from the Division was received that the attack of the 367th Infantry, 184th Brigade had been repulsed (on our left), but that two companies were being sent forward to reinforce their attack."

Page 159, Division Report, "10 Nov. 9:30 hr. —Attack by 367th Infantry west of Moselle not prosecuted because of failure of 56th Infantry, 7th Division, to capture Preny. The report of the C. O., 367th Infantry at pages 2 and 3 shows the facts and reasons."

Page 160, Division report, "Inasmuch as the 367th Infantry west of the Moselle made no advance due to the fact that it was necessary that the 7th Division should first capture Preny before an advance was practicable, no report is made here of enemy units engaged west of the Moselle."

That, I take it, is enough to prove that no success was achieved by units advancing or to

advance on our left. It is necessary to prove *that* for the benefit of only a very few, for the overwhelming majority of Americans (owing to the effort to give all units equal credit and imply that all concerned succeeded) are ignorant, or seriously in doubt whether the 92nd Division or any of its units achieved any real success *anywhere.*

Now let us see about our brigade—the 183rd, which comprised the 365th and 366th infantry and the 350th Machine Gun Battalion. The Brigade report says, latter part of paragraph 2 on page 149, same book, "The object of this attack was to capture and hold the Boise Frehaut and the Bois Voivrotte (Bois Voivrotte is the name of the small wood I spoke of in the lecture, to our right) with the object of advancing the line of observation of the Marbache sector to the northern boundary of these woods." So our brigade orders were to capture and hold these two woods, and, as we were advancing from the south, the line we were to hold respectively, was the *northern boundary* of both these woods.

Page 149, paragraph 3 of Brigade report:

"The attack was to be made on the Bois Frehaut by the 2nd Bn. 365th Inf., Major Warner A. Ross, commanding. The attack on the Bois Voivrotte was to be made by two platoons, 2nd Bn. 366th Inf. At the zero," etc.

At the early hour of 8: 12, the report says, page 150, a message had been relayed from Division headquarters to Brigade headquarters to the effect that Bois Voivrotte was completely occupied. It was very small compared to the positions the 2nd Bn. 365th Inf. was attacking. And the next entry, as given on page 150, is: "At 9 a. m. a message was received that sharp fighting by machine guns was going on in the Bois Voivrotte and the Bois Frehaut." This was the case in Bois Frehaut at that time and at 8:30 when I sent that particular message relative to Bois Frehaut by pigeon. Now, the fact that machine gun fighting was going on in Bois Voivrotte means that either the 8:12 message about it being completely occupied was premature or that machine guns had been sent in by the enemy after the platoons of the 2nd Bn. 366th Inf. "completely occupied" it. For if enemy machine gunners were occupying and

fighting in the wood it could not be said to be "completely occupied" by our troops.

After the 2nd Battalion, 365th Infantry had completely occupied Bois Frehaut and established our line along the northern boundary and also the eastern boundary of that wood (it was much farther north than the northern boundary of Bois Voivrotte) it became impracticable for the enemy to send or keep troops in Bois Voivrotte unless he drove my Battalion from Bois Frehaut. He was still at liberty, however, to rain artillery fire upon it. But here it is officially from the commander of the 2nd Bn. 366th Inf. On page 151, Brigade report: "3:05 p. m. Telephone message from C. O. 2nd Bn. 366th Inf. that he had withdrawn his lines to southern edge of Bois Voivrotte because of heavy enemy shelling—high explosives and gas in woods." This final cessation of their efforts to hold Bois Voivrotte and withdrawal of their lines to the *southern* edge of it was *one* reason for the next entry on same page: "3:55 p. m. Orders received from Commanding General 92nd Division not to launch attack as planned for 5 p. m., but to consolidate positions gained, holding

them at all costs against possible counter attacks." For how could the other units that were supposed to attack through the units supposed to be holding Bois Voivrotte advance beyond its northern boundary when as a matter of fact according to the Battalion C. O.—directly in command—they were only *holding* the *southern* boundary. Obviously it was necessary to *recapture* Bois Voivrotte and *hold* it—all of it, before they could consider capturing anything beyond, or north of it.

The *other* reason for the calling off by the Division Commander of the attack scheduled to be launched from the northern boundaries of Bois Frehaut and Bois Voivrotte at 5 p. m., on the 10th, was equally obvious. For how could the units scheduled to attack through the 2nd Battalion of the 365th then holding the *northern* boundary of Bois Frehaut, be expected to advance *beyond* us when they had never succeeded, due to enemy artillery fire, in reaching even the *southern* boundary of Bois Frehaut.

At the time when the attack *beyond* Bois Voivrotte was almost due to be launched by

other units of the 366th they were *not holding* Bois Voivrotte but had withdrawn their line to the southern edge and were holding what previously had been no-man's land—very much narrower there than in front of Ferme de Belle Aire. As can readily be seen, this failure to hold, on their part, left me in a precarious condition should the enemy in force attempt to envelop us through Bois Voivrotte. This was largely the cause for the order to the artillery mentioned in the Division Report, page 160: "11 Nov. 3:59—Artillery directed to put down barrage on northern edge of Bois Voivrotte, this point not being occupied by our troops." I think, bearing in mind General Pershing's brief remarks relative to attacks on the 11th of November, that this covers them all, including troops of the 7th Division attacking through the C. R. adjoining the 367th on the left.

What does all this mean? It means that of all the battalions concerned or engaged in attacking toward Metz during the drive that started the morning of November 10th, the only battalion that accomplished its mission, or in

other words, the only one that was able to carry out its orders—the only one that captured and held anything, was the 2nd Battalion of the 365th Infantry. Had this battalion *not* succeeded in capturing and holding Bois Frehaut, in fact had it not succeeded in all of its various missions at all times, and had its companies, as companies, not succeeded in all their various missions, I would not be publishing any book about it at all, let alone praising the battalion as I have.

But let us see some more quotations from things included in Dr. Scott's History. Ralph W. Tyler, the colored war correspondent, writing, necessarily from hearsay mostly, at a time when the confusion and din of battle made it impossible to foresee results, could, however, see the landscape in general and he knew who was attacking and later who was holding Bois Frehaut. He also visited Bois Frehaut after the armistice, so among other things he wrote, page 289: ". . . . and so the 2nd Battalion went into action with but one white officer, the Major. No unit in the advance had a more difficult position to take and hold than the position

assigned to the 2nd Battalion of the 365th. The Bois Frehaut was a network of barbed-wire entanglements, and the big guns in Metz had nothing to do but sweep the woods with a murderous fire, which they did most effectively. French and Senegalese in turn had failed to hold these woods, for it was worse than a hell—it had become the sepulchre of hundreds. I (Ralph W. Tyler) was over and through these woods; I saw the mass of barbed-wire entanglements; I saw the nests in the trees in which Germans had camouflaged machine guns that rained a fire upon the Allied troops.

"It is impossible to describe this scene of carnage. The order to the colored men of the 365th was to "take and hold" although it was believed, almost to a certainty, that they could not hold it, even if they did take it. But they did take and hold it, and these men of the 2nd Battalion, with Spartan-like courage; with an endurance unbelievable, would be holding the position at this writing had not the armistice been signed or had they not received orders to retire."

He also says that "the Major commanding stated to me that the world had never produced gamer fighters than the colored men who made up his battalion of the 365th infantry." But his next three paragraphs as quoted in "Scott's History" are mostly erroneous as to previous conditions. The records will show (the necessary records are not in that book), but every one who was in the 365th Infantry and most every one in the Division knows that the 2nd Bn. 365th held the front line battalion sector east of the Moselle called C. R. Musson *continuously* for thirty-one days, then went back, occupied the second line of defense for three days (during which time various units marched up and engaged the enemy to ascertain his strength), returned to Pont-a-Mousson on the 9th and attacked on the morning of the 10th. During this time the 1st and 3rd Battalions took turns holding the C. R. on our right—C. R. Les Menils. I had not read Dr. Scott's book at the time I made my lecture. During the Division's occupancy of the St. Die sector this battalion held a front line sector continuously. In the Argonne it did road work as

close to the advanced line as any of the battalions. The Division was praised by General Pershing for its work in facilitating traffic during the Argonne Meuse drive, that is, the early part of that drive. Elements of the 368th Infantry were in the attacking line for a short time. Early in October the entire Division was moved out of the Argonne-Meuse section and to the Marbache sector. No battalion of the 368th Infantry ever held a front line position in the Marbache sector.

To show you how Mr. Tyler was impressed with Bois Frehaut I will quote from his writings again. Page 286, Dr. Scott's book: "The armistice stopped their advance into Berlin, but they did reach the nearest point to the German city of Metz in what was designed as a victorious march to Berlin, and the valor they displayed, their courageous, heroic fighting all along that advance, won for our men in the 92nd Division high praise from superior officers, including the corps and division commanders, for they never wavered an instant, not even in that awful hell, the Frehaut Woods, upon which the big guns of Metz constantly

played, which the Senegalese were unable to hold, but which our colored soldiers from America did take and did hold, until the signal came announcing the cessation of hostilities."

I shall now give a few more extracts from the Brigade Commander's report. On page 150, same book: "At 10 a. m. (Nov. 10th) a runner message was received from the Commanding Officer, 2nd Bn., 365th Inf., to the effect that they were being heavily shelled in the Bois Frehaut by enemy artillery, and requesting counter battery fire; it was also stated that their advance had almost reached the northern edge of Bois Frehaut. Heavy artillery was asked to counter-fire on enemy artillery, which they promptly did." I sent this message about 9 o'clock.

On page 151, Brigade report: "At 11:15 a. m. a message from the C. O. 2nd Bn. 365th Inf. to the effect that Bois Frehaut was completely occupied, that Boches were shelling woods with gas and high explosives, and requesting counter battery fire." This was the message spoken of in the lecture that I sent at 10 o'clock by pigeon to Division Head-

quarters. It was read there and relayed to Brigade Headquarters (situated in another village).

Page 152, Brigade report: "Our advance was for a depth of about three and one-half kilometers. When this Brigade took over the sector just east of the Moselle river there was a deep re-entrant next to the river, due to the St. Mihiel drive which advanced the line several kilometers on the west bank of the Moselle river, while the line on the east bank remained in place."

The reason it "remained in place" was that neither French, Americans nor Senegalese troops had suceeded in getting into it (Bois Frehaut) very far—let alone taking and holding it.

Page 153, Brigade report: "Full use was made of auxiliary arms, machine guns, 37 millimeter guns, Stokes mortars and rifle grenades. All of these weapons, except Stokes mortars were brought into play in the heavy fighting in the Bois Frehaut to combat enemy machine gun nests. 37 mm. guns were pushed well to the front when direct fire at enemy machine

gun positions could be obtained. It was to the extensive use of these weapons that the rapid advance through Bois Frehaut was due. Machine guns were used frequently to cover the flanks of the attacking infantry. They aided materially in protecting the N. E. corner of the Bois Frehaut from an enemy counter attack from Bouxières. Trench mortars were placed in position after the Frehaut woods were taken, to cover the new front."

Page 154, Brigade report: "The lines held by the Germans were unusually strong, being the result of four years of stabilization in that sector. Their artillery was most active, as unquestionably during these years they had registered on every point of importance in the sector. Furthermore, their positions were the first line of defense of Metz. The troops occupying them were young, efficient men and not old soldiers from a rest sector."

I wish to state here that our Division artillery rendered excellent service. This is especially true when we consider that it had been in the line only a few days.

But a very apparent inconsistency appears in

the Brigade report and is embodied in the Division report, page 161: "The attack was renewed on the morning of the 11th, the lines being advanced to the northern edge of the Bois Frehaut a distance of three and one-half km. from an original line." The *Division* report says, as you notice, that the line was advanced on the 11th to the northern edge of Bois Frehaut, the Division commander well knowing that the line never was advanced beyond the northern edge of Bois Frehaut, for the next paragraph refers to the final battle line, which the co-ordinates show *was* the northern edge of Bois Frehaut, but the Brigade report upon which this part of the Division report is based by a Division commander who took command just after the armistice says, page 152: "The attack on the morning of Nov. 10, by units of the Brigade wiped out this re-entrant by advancing our lines on the east bank of the Moselle river a distance of two and one-quarter km. The advance thus made was held against heavy artillery and machine gun fire and high concentration of gas. The attack was renewed on the morning of Nov. 11, lines being advanced

a distance of three and one-quarter km. an original line."

That would indicate an advance of one km. on Nov. 11th. I don't care to discuss that further than to say that it is *incorrect.* The final battle line shows as the northern edge of Bois Frehaut. The Division report says, "the attack was renewed on the morning of the 11th the lines being advanced to the northern edge of Bois Frehaut, a distance of three and one-half km. from an original line." Since, as clearly shown, the line was never advanced beyond the northern edge of Bois Frehaut *where* was *that* advance made? Speaking of this mysterious advance of the 11th the Brigade report says, "Our liason with troops west of the river was thereby greatly improved," indicating that the said unexplainable and vague "advance" was near the river—hence on my front.

General Pershing says that "examination of the records shows that the 2nd Battalion did take the Bois Frehaut on November 10th and that this battalion held this position until the armistice went into effect." How could he say that we took the Bois Frehaut on Nov. 10th if

there was a km. (which is almost a mile) remaining of it to be taken on Nov. 11th? Of the advance of the 11th he says, "advanced a short distance but *had retired* to cover."

This same Brigade report shows that at 10 a. m., Nov. 10th, a message was received showing that the 2nd Bn. 365th Inf. had almost reached the northern edge of Bois Frehaut, and that at 11:15, Nov. 10th a message was received showing the Bois Frehaut was *completely occupied.* The quotation above from the same report says that the re-entrant was wiped out by advancing our lines on the east bank of the Moselle on November 10th and that the advance thus made *was held* against heavy artillery and machine gun fire, etc. The Brigade order for the attack on November 11th—the order from which Gen. Pershing quoted, plainly shows that that attack was to be launched from the northern edge of Bois Frehaut—our front line.

It is too bad to have to spend time correcting such a discrepancy as that, but that's the way it reads in Dr. Scott's book and I have no reason to think that the Brigade and Division reports are erroneously printed in that book. It *might*

give a wrong impression to a casual reader. Some might not take the trouble to *see* that *no* advance was made and held on the 11th of November. The line was advanced to the northern edge of Bois Frehaut on November 10th and never receded so much as one foot for a single instant. Few enough colored battalions had the opportunity to prove their true worth. I do not propose to leave a single cloud on the record of the glorious *success* and *achievements* of *one* colored battalion. This does not in the least detract from the glory of other units but will *add greatly* to the prestige and standing of colored soldiers as a whole.

In another place the report of the general commanding our Brigade says, page 154, Dr. Scott's book: "The commanding officers of units making the attack, and also of the artillery, were constantly stating that they were hurried into these movements without proper preparation. Had they been familiar with such operations, the time allowed would have been sufficient." The Major General, commanding the 92nd Division who made the Division report on the operations of November 10th and

11th says, page 162, same book: "The attack was made on very brief preparation, too brief in view of the strength of the enemy positions, which were very strongly held."

I told in the lecture what the Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixth-fifth Infantry had undergone in the Marbache Sector and how we worked all of the night preceding the attack on things that *had to be done* regardless of familiarity with anything. I do not remember that I made any complaints about the shortness of time for preparation. Possibly I did, for I was at all times doing anything and everything to insure success against the enemy. But whether the time was too short or too long I again call your attention to the fact that *this* battalion accomplished its mission, fully, completely, magnificently, under the guns of Metz.

Lieutenant Colonel A. E. Deitsch, a veteran of the Regular Army, who was my immediate superior and was in command of our Regiment during that drive, and who, before coming to our Regiment, had served in other Divisions in the battle line, said in a letter to me: "The

handling of your battalion during the ninth, tenth and morning of November eleventh, 1918, (which lead to the capture of Bois Frehaut) could not, I believe, have been conducted any better. As you well know the capture of this position is credited to you and your battalion."

On page 154, same book, the Brigade report, speaking of the work of the Brigade as a whole, says: "There is no doubt that some details of the operation were not carried out as well as might have been done by more experienced troops. These were the results of mistaken judgment due to lack of experience rather than to lack of offensive spirit."

This is true of the Brigade as a whole and the report from which it is copied is a very general statement of the work of the *entire* Brigade in that series of operations. I say and have shown and am ready to prove more exhaustively if necessary that the above statement does not concern *one* of the six infantry battalions of that Brigade, namely, the Second Battalion, Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth.

Suppose I should admit or should say that

the battalion that captured this seemingly impregnable position and held it continuously under the defenses of Metz, was only a very mediocre battalion, or suppose I should admit or should say, "Oh, yes, the men were anxious enough and after they got going fought savagely with razors or knives or bayonets, but the colored officers had no judgment and could not handle their men and it was a pretty poor battalion." What then could be said, what would *have* to be said of the *other* units of the Ninety-second Division and of units engaged of the Seventh Division that *failed* utterly to accomplish their missions during the same attack?

The truth is that those other battalions and units that failed to advance and hold against the world's strongest position—Metz—were excellent troops and in many instances did most heroic work. They were fully equal on the average to battalions and units of the foremost American Divisions. The truth is equally clear to every one who knows or *wants* to know that the Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry was a most *ex-*

ceptional, a most *wonderful* battalion, fully equal in *all* respects to the very finest battalions in the American Army or any army that fought in the Great World War. I challenge any one to disprove this statement.

They *were* wonderful fighters with the trench knife and bayonet, but they were equally efficient and energetic with all other infantry arms. Take the other extreme from fighting—paper work. The paper work that had to be done in a company of our army was staggering. It required ceaseless work and absolute accuracy. The companies of this battalion were unsurpassed. "H" Company, for instance, as is well known, did and turned in paper work that was practically perfect at all times. Then there was march or road discipline. Some of the marches made were very trying. As an example, the Second Battalion of the Three Hundred and Sixty-fifth Infantry marched from Camp d'Italien in the Argonne Forest to Camp Cabaud north east of Les Isilett during the night, through mud and through the confusion and blockade of traffic you have all heard about, just preceding the Argonne Offensive, and *ar-*

rived with every man who started. *Not one straggler.* I furnished signed certificates before it could be believed by my superiors. I have already referred to the very significant fact that no officers were ever placed under arrest or sent before efficiency boards. Every statement I have made and every inference I have drawn is based on a personal knowledge of *facts.*

My efforts to make that Battalion a real success were due solely to the fact that it was an American Battalion engaged in the fight against our Nation's enemies. My enlisted men were colored and they wore the American uniform. My Officers were colored and they were commissioned, *not by me, but by the United States Government.* If you are colored or if perchance you are white and care to do some thinking about me and about my Battalion and about many things in general, read on pages 433 and 438 of the book I have been referring to. By the way, the Battalion Commander there referred to relieved me (he was then a Lieutenant Colonel) of the command of the Regiment (Three Hundred and Sixty-

fifth Infantry) the second day after the Armistice took effect.

It is my idea of justice that the race—namely the American Negro—that produced men who served their country so loyally, so bravely, so capably both as officers and as enlisted men under my command, should *know the truth* about my battalion. It would matter little whether the outfit were a division, a brigade or a battalion. It happens to have been a battalion. And it matters little *what* colored battalion it was, but it does matter a great deal and mean a great deal to Colored Americans that one of the very finest and greatest battalions in the American Army and in the world was an American *colored* battalion.

If what I have said about my Colored Battalion shall in any way aid, or shall inspire and stimulate Colored Americans in their struggle for advancement and for the attainment of Righteousness that "Exalteth a nation," I shall be gratified.

The following is the *testimonial* I referred to. It substantiates some things spoken of in the lecture.

Headquarters 365th Infantry.

Major Warner A. Ross, 365th Infantry, commander of the 2nd Battalion, while leading his battalion and part of the First Battalion into action in the "Bois Frehaut" on the east bank of the Moselle River north of Pont-a-Musson and under the guns of Metz, on the morning of November 10th, 1918, with Brigade orders to capture and hold this strong German position, displayed most exceptional bravery, coolness and efficiency under heavy fire. He personally led his forces and established his first waves in their firing position in no-man's land immediately in front of the enemy's observers, machine gunners and snipers. He then, after encouraging his men through enemy wire, under heavy barrage established his Post of Command in the edge of the "Bois Frehaut" in what just before was enemy territory. This Post of Command was a shell hole with no protection from artillery fire and was established in this place so that runners coming back from platoons and companies could follow the

edge of the wood and easily find him. This he maintained as his P. C. until 10:30 o'clock on the morning of the 11th, when news of the Armistice reached him.

Major Ross refused to move his Headquarters despite the fact that a hostile plane had located it and that others abandoned it. Shrapnel burst over it and high explosive shells tore great holes all around it. The sides were caved in and he was once almost completely buried. During the night it became filled with mustard gas. He ordered lime sprinkled in it and a fire built and remained. By moving to a less exposed position or to a dugout his liaison would have been impaired. It was excellent liaison that enabled him to send in reinforcements to meet counter attacks and flank movements attempted by the enemy.

The bravery of Major Ross and his indifference to personal safety in his determination to win this battle are considered worthy of special recognition. Such conduct is far in excess of the ordinary line of duty of a Battalion Commander. The "Bois Frehaut," "Belle Aire Ferme," "Ferme de Pence" and "Bois de la

tete d'Or" were taken from the enemy and the battle line changed by this victory.

Witnesses (Signed):

EDWARD B. SIMMONS,
Major, Medical Corps, Regimental Surgeon.

F. E. SWEITZER,
Captain, 365th Inf., Regtl. Adjutant.

T. C. HOPKINS,
Captain, 365th Inf., Regtl. Intelligence Officer.

WALTER R. SANDERS,
Captain, 365th Inf., Second in Command at that time.

WM. W. GREEN,
Captain, 365th Inf., Comdg. Co. H, 365th Inf.

JOHN F. PRITCHARD,
1st Lieut, 365th Inf., Adjutant, 2nd Bn.

GARRETT M. LEWIS,
1st Lieut., 365th Inf., Comdg. Reserve Co. at that time.

U. J. ROBINSON,
1st Lieut., 365th Inf., Chaplain.

THE END

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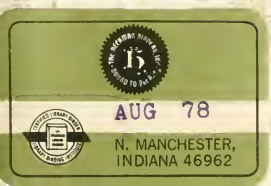
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